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What is claimed is:

1. A process for preparing enantiomerically enriched (4-bromo-2-(hydroxymethyl)phenyl)-(4-fluorophenyl)methanol from racemic (4-bromo-2-(hydroxymethyl)phenyl)-(4-fluorophenyl)methanol, comprising:
  - (a) converting said racemic (4-bromo-2-(hydroxymethyl)phenyl)-(4-fluorophenyl)methanol to a racemic monoester intermediate by reaction with a carboxylic acid or a reactive derivative thereof;
  - (b) reacting said racemic monoester intermediate with an optically active acid to form a salt of said racemic monoester intermediate;
  - (c) crystallization of said salt to recover an enantiomerically enriched, crystalline form of said salt;
  - (d) neutralization of said salt to give an enantiomerically enriched form of said monoester intermediate; and
  - (e) hydrolysis of the enantiomerically enriched form of said monoester intermediate to produce said enantiomerically enriched (4-bromo-2-(hydroxymethyl)phenyl)-(4-fluorophenyl)methanol.
2. The process of claim 1, wherein the (4-bromo-2-(hydroxymethyl)phenyl)-(4-fluorophenyl)methanol produced in step (e) is enriched in an enantiomer which can be converted to escitalopram by dehydration and by substitution of bromine by a nitrile group.
3. The process of claim 1 or 2, wherein step (a) comprises reaction of

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said racemic (4-bromo-2-(hydroxymethyl)phenyl)-(4-fluorophenyl)methanol with a reactive derivative of a carboxylic acid, said reactive derivative being selected from the group comprising acid chlorides and acid anhydrides.

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4. The process of claim 3, wherein said step (a) comprises reaction of said racemic (4-bromo-2-(hydroxymethyl)phenyl)-(4-fluorophenyl)methanol with acetic anhydride to form the monoacetate ester of said racemic (4-bromo-2-(hydroxymethyl)phenyl)-(4-fluorophenyl)methanol.
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5. The process of claim 1, wherein said optically active acid is di-p-toluoyl tartaric acid.
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6. The process of claim 5, wherein said optically active acid is (+)-di-p-toluoyl tartaric acid.
7. The monoacetate ester of (4-bromo-2-(hydroxymethyl)phenyl)-(4-fluorophenyl)methanol and salts thereof.
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8. An enantiomerically enriched monoacetate ester of (4-bromo-2-(hydroxymethyl)phenyl)-(4-fluorophenyl)methanol and salts thereof.
9. The ester of claim 8, being enriched in an enantiomer which can be converted to escitalopram by dehydration and by substitution of bromine by a nitrile group.
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10. The ester of claim 9, wherein said salt is the (+)-di-p-toluoyl tartaric acid salt of said monoacetate ester.
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11. A process for preparing escitalopram, comprising:

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- (a) reacting 5-bromophthalide with 4-fluoro-phenylmagnesium bromide to produce 4-bromo-2-hydroxymethyl-4'-fluorobenzophenone;
- 5 (b) reacting said 4-bromo-2-hydroxymethyl-4'-fluorobenzophenone with 3-dimethylaminopropyl magnesium chloride to produce racemic (4-bromo-2-(hydroxymethyl)phenyl)-(4-fluorophenyl)methanol;
- 10 (c) converting said racemic (4-bromo-2-(hydroxymethyl)phenyl)-(4-fluorophenyl)methanol to a racemic monoester intermediate by reaction with a carboxylic acid or a reactive derivative thereof;
- 15 (d) reacting said racemic monoester intermediate with an optically active acid to form a salt of said racemic monoester intermediate;
- (e) crystallization of said salt to recover an enantiomerically enriched, crystalline form of said salt;
- 20 (f) neutralization of said salt to give an enantiomerically enriched form of said monoester intermediate;
- (g) hydrolysis of the enantiomerically enriched form of said monoester intermediate to produce enantiomerically enriched (4-bromo-2-(hydroxymethyl)phenyl)-(4-fluorophenyl)methanol;
- 25 (h) dehydration of said enantiomerically enriched (4-bromo-2-(hydroxymethyl)phenyl)-(4-fluorophenyl)methanol to produce enantiomerically enriched 1-(4'-fluorophenyl)-1-(3-dimethylaminopropyl)-5-bromophthalane; and
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- (i) replacement of bromine by a nitrile group to produce escitalopram.

12. The process of claim 11, wherein step (c) comprises reaction of said  
5 racemic (4-bromo-2-(hydroxymethyl)phenyl)-(4-fluorophenyl)methanol  
with a reactive derivative of a carboxylic acid, said reactive derivative  
being selected from the group comprising acid chlorides and acid  
anhydrides.
- 10 13. The process of claim 12, wherein said step (c) comprises reaction of  
said racemic (4-bromo-2-(hydroxymethyl)phenyl)-(4-  
fluorophenyl)methanol with acetic anhydride to form the monoacetate  
ester of said racemic (4-bromo-2-(hydroxymethyl)phenyl)-(4-  
15 fluorophenyl)methanol.
14. The process of claim 11, wherein said optically active acid is di-p-  
toluoyl tartaric acid.
15. The process of claim 14, wherein said optically active acid is (+)-di-p-  
20 toluoyl tartaric acid.